

ROUTING

Top Secret 219

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NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE DAILY CABLE

Tuesday 17 October 1978 CG NIDC 78/242



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National Intelligence Daily Cable for Tuesday, 17 October 1978.

The NID Cable is for the purpose of informing senior US officials.

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JAPAN: Ohira - Fukuda

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Japanese Liberal Democratic Party Secretary General Ohira's decision last weekend to break his political truce with Prime Minister Fukuda by formally announcing his candidacy in the ruling party's presidential election--in effect, the contest for prime minister--reflects Ohira's desire to boost the momentum of his campaign in time for the party's national primary next month. Both public opinion and sentiment among Liberal Democratic Party leaders have been moving in Fukuda's direction, although the election's outcome remains uncertain.

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Much of this uncertainty arises from the new rules--adopted following the Lockheed scandal--under which the election will be conducted. Unlike previous elections when only the party Diet members voted for the president, this year the candidates must first compete in a nationwide primary where all dues-paying party members--some 1.5 million--will vote. The top two vote-getters in the November primary will then compete in a second, final election by the Liberal Democratic Dietmen.

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Fukuda, who has held the domestic limelight for the last several months, seems to have the edge over his rival. Whether he can keep his lead, however, will depend in part on his ability to attract the help of other party faction leaders, like Liberal Democratic Executive Board Chairman Nakasone, in turning out the primary vote.

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For his part, Ohira is counting on the backing of former Prime Minister Tanaka, his primary party ally and the leader of one of the largest factions. Ohira's fortunes depend directly on vigorous grass-roots campaigning by Tanaka's group and others in order to help him overcome Fukuda's advantages as an incumbent.

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Private comments by Liberal Democratic leaders suggest that Ohira's backing in the party has been slipping in the past few months. By announcing his candidacy, Ohira almost certainly

25X1 hopes to stem that perception as well as to give himself an opportunity to challenge Fukuda openly on the issues before next month's election. [REDACTED]

USSR - SOUTHEAST ASIA: Firyubin

25X1 [REDACTED] Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister Firyubin, who oversees Soviet policy in Southeast Asia, is expected to visit all countries in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations later this month. His trip is intended to support recent Vietnamese diplomacy in the region and to test non-Communist Southeast Asian receptivity to greater Soviet involvement in light of recent Chinese treatment of Vietnam. Firyubin probably will be received warily. Most Southeast Asians will resent his acting as a stalking horse for the Vietnamese, and most will respond cautiously to any Soviet blandishment.

25X1 [REDACTED] Firyubin is likely to support Vietnam's version of its dispute with China and Cambodia and to urge his hosts to respond favorably to Vietnamese initiatives for better bilateral relations. He probably will claim some credit for Vietnam's recent adoption of a more positive attitude toward ASEAN and perhaps again suggest that ASEAN find ways to allow Vietnamese participation in that organization.

25X1 [REDACTED] Although Soviet propagandists in recent years have echoed Vietnam's criticism of ASEAN, the Soviets have held a basically positive attitude toward it since 1971 when Moscow decided that it was not a creation of the US or a "lackey" of the Southeast Asian Treaty Organization.

25X1 [REDACTED] This is Firyubin's second trip to the area in less than a year, and it testifies to Moscow's desire to profit from the fast-breaking developments in the region. Firyubin's earlier plans to visit Japan, however, have been postponed indefinitely as a demonstration of Moscow's anger at the conclusion of the Sino-Japanese Peace Treaty in August. [REDACTED]

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BRIEFS

Warsaw Pact

25X1 [] The Military Council of the Warsaw Pact began a four-day meeting in East Germany yesterday to discuss activities for 1979. Deputy defense ministers from the Warsaw Pact countries, including Marshal Viktor Kulikov, Commander in Chief of the Pact, are attending the conference.

25X1 [] The agenda focuses on drafting specific military proposals for the creation of a Pact-wide military alerting system, and on training, including scheduled military demonstrations. The Military Council has normally met twice annually--spring and fall--since its first meeting in December 1969. []

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USSR

25X1 [] The airlift portion of the Soviets' semiannual troop rotation began Sunday. Since then, there have been 13 flights to East Germany. Flights will probably continue for the next three or four weeks.

25X1 [] Some of the troops involved will travel by rail, but most will be transported by Soviet civilian aircraft. Last fall, there were 1,125 round-trip flights to Eastern Europe and at least 54 to Mongolia. []

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